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**NORTHERN ELEMENTS IN THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE
NAVAHO**

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The general character of the Navaho legends recorded by Dr Washington Matthews differs fundamentally from traditions collected in the northern portion of our continent. Different geographical surroundings and the influence of a different culture convey the strong impression that we have to deal with material that sprang from independent sources. I was much interested in finding on a close examination of the Navaho legends that there was interwoven with a large mass of material foreign to northern tribes many tales undoubtedly derived from the same sources from which the northern tales spring. Most of them are so complex and curious that, taken in connection with the known northern affiliations of the Navaho, they must be considered as a definite proof of either a survival of ancient myths or as proving a later connection.

I will briefly enumerate here the legends or parts of legends which I think must be considered as belonging to the northern area.

Among the Coyote tales is one (Matthews, *Navaho Legends*, p. 87) in which it is told how the Coyote visited the Porcupine, who scratched his nose until blood flowed freely out over it; he then roasted it until it turned into a piece of fine meat. Coyote invited his host to return the visit in two days. He tried to imitate the Porcupine, but failed ignominiously. He next visited the Wolf, who roasted two arrowpoints that were transformed into minced meat. Again the Coyote tried to imitate his host, but failed. Compare with this the tradition of the Chinook, who tell how Bluejay tried to imitate his host (Boas, *Chinook Texts*, p. 178); that of the Comox, Nootka, and Kwakiutl of Vancouver island, and of the Bella Coola and Tsimshian of Northern British Columbia (Boas, *Indianische Sagen von der Nord-Pacifischen Kueste Amerikas*, pp. 76, 106, 177, 245), who tell the same story of the Raven; that of the Ponca (Dorsey, *The Cegiha Language*, p. 557), who tell the same story of Ictinike, and that of the Micmac (Rand, *Legends of the Micmacs*, pp. 300, 302), who relate

how the Rabbit tried to imitate his host. Although the peculiar method of producing food by magic is not always the same, the whole stories are identical to all intents and purposes.

Later on it is told how the Coyote was playing with his eyes, tearing them out of their sockets and throwing them up; then they fell back into their sockets (Matthews, p. 90). We find the identical incident among the Shuswap in the interior of British Columbia (Boas, Sagen, etc., p. 8) and among the Blackfeet (Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, p. 153).

Once upon a time the Coyote met the Brown Giant. He proposed to him that they should vomit. He placed a large piece of pine bark before each as a dish, and bade the Brown Giant keep his eyes shut till he was told to open them. Coyote vomited bugs and worms, while the Brown Giant vomited fat venison. Coyote exchanged the dishes, and then told the Giant to open his eyes (Matthews, p. 227). The Shuswap ascribe the same trick to Coyote when he met the Cannibal Owl (Boas, Sagen, etc., p. 9).

The people sought to divine their fate. They threw a hide-scraper into the water, saying, "If it sinks, we perish; if it floats, we live." It floated, and all rejoiced. Then Coyote repeated the same test with a stone. It sank, and therefore people die (Matthews, p. 77). Among the Blackfeet the first woman asked the "Old Man" if people would be immortal. In order to decide this question he threw a buffalo chip into the water, saying that if it floated people would resurrect on the fourth day after their death. It floated. Then the woman took a stone, saying, "If it floats, we will always live; if it sinks, people must die." It sank, and therefore people die (Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, pp. 138, 139).

One of the most striking resemblances between the myths of the Navaho and those of the Northwest is the visit of the War Gods to their father, the Sun. A brief abstract of this portion of the myth is as follows: The War Gods, the sons of the Sun, leave the earth in quest of their father. On their way they meet the Spider Woman, who advises them in regard to a number of dangers that they will encounter on their way. These were the crushing rocks which close upon those who try to pass them, the reeds with leaves as sharp as knives, a country covered with cane cacti, and the land of the rising sands. They pass these and reach the house of the Sun, the door of which is guarded by

pairs of sentinels—bears, serpents, wind, and lightning—two of each kind. When the Sun enters he is angry and tries to kill the intruders on sharp spikes with which the floor of his house is covered. Then he tries to kill them in an overheated sweat-house, and finally by means of poisonous tobacco (p. 109, ff.).

One of the most important legends of northwestern America, which occurs in a great number of versions, tells how one or two boys visited the Sun in quest of a wife. They are warned of the dangers of the road by two women. The last of these dangers is generally the snapping door of the Sun's house. After arriving at the house the young man marries the Sun's daughter. The Sun next tries to kill him by means of the sharp spikes on the floor of his house (Boas, l. c., pp. 39, 66, 111, 118, 136, 171). The visitor succeeds in crushing these spikes, and is then led to a tree that is being split. The Sun knocks the wedges out of the tree, intending to crush his son-in-law, who escapes in a miraculous way (Boas, l. c., pp. 39, 67, 70, 111, 118, 171, 136, 198; Chinook, l. c., p. 34). The other tests vary, but the test of the overheated sweat-house is not absent. It is found among the Chinook (l. c., p. 58) and the Ponca (l. c., p. 160). The most striking similarities in these tales are the visit to the Sun with the subsequent attempts on the life of the visitor, the spikes on the floor of the Sun's house, and the test in the overheated sweat-house. In one version of the Navaho legend it is also described how the woman who warned the young men hardened their skins so that the spikes could not hurt them (p. 232). The same incident occurs in all the corresponding legends from northwest America.

To a similar class of legends belong the attempts of Deer Raiser on the life of his son-in-law, Nač'ñsçxani (Matthews, pp. 186, ff.), which find their analogy in the tales mentioned above, as well as in a Micmac legend recorded by Rand (l. c., p. 90), in which the wife's mother tries to kill her son-in-law.

The manner in which the people were saved from the deluge also finds its analogy in the Northwest. According to the Navaho legend the people entered a hollow reed, which swayed with the motion of the waters (p. 75). In the legend of the Tsetsaut, an Athapascan tribe of southern Alaska, they saved themselves in two hollow trees that were swaying to and fro as the water rose (Journ. Am. Folklore, 1896, p. 262).

Another interesting legend which has close analogies in the

Northwest is that of the man who was carried to the eyrie of a fabulous eagle. When the eagle drops him into his nest he squirts on the rock some blood that he carried in a bag, and thus makes him believe that he has been killed. The eaglets complain that the food that their father has brought is still alive, but he flies away. Then the man asks the eaglets: "When will your father come back, and where will he sit when he comes?" They answered: "He will return when we have a he-rain (thunderstorm)." Upon being further questioned they said that their mother would return when they had a she-rain (without thunder and lightning). The man then kills the old eagles when they return. He threw the young ones out of the nest, transforming them into an eagle and an owl (Matthews, pp. 119, 120). The Shuswap tell of a similar incident. A man is carried by an eagle to his nest. He is thrown against a rock and deceives the eagle by squirting red and white paint out of his mouth. Then he threatens the eaglets and by their help induces the old eagle to sit in a position in which he is able to kill her. Then the eaglets carry him down from the eyrie, and upon arriving on level ground he kills them (Boas, Sagen, etc., p. 4). The Ponca tell of a similar incident, but the eagles are made to reside in the sky (Dorsey, p. 30). Here it is said that the male eagle returns with the rain, the female with the darkness. Among the Hare Indians we find a tale of a man who climbed an eagle's nest in a fir tree. He awaits the arrival of the old eagles and is told by the eagles that their father arrives with a bright light, while their mother arrives with the night. The man finally killed the eaglets (Petitot, *Traditions Indiennes du Canada Nord-Ouest*, p. 144). The Dog Rib Indians tell the same story, but the male brings the snow, the female the rain. The man then kills the old ones and transforms the man-eating eaglet into an eagle living on fish (*ibid.*, pp. 323, 324). Petitot records the same story from the Chippewayans (*l. c.*, p. 359).

While I consider that these coincidences have considerable weight as evidence of elements of common origin in the mythologies of the Northwest and of the Southwest, the following are so general that their value is open to doubt. Still in connection with the preceding they are of considerable interest, no matter if we prefer to interpret them as analogous independent phenomena or as due to dissemination.

On page 91 it is told that the vital principle of the Coyote was kept in the tip of his nose and in the end of his tail. The Tillamook of Oregon tell that a certain spirit kept her vital principle in her hat. The Cathlamet of Columbia river tell of a being who kept it in her little finger, while the Kwakiutl relate that a certain spirit was able to lay it aside and kept it in a knot-hole.

The incident of the alien god who flung visitors down a precipice and who is finally flung down himself by the War God, to be eaten by his children at the base of the cliff (p. 122), reminds us somewhat of the corresponding incident in the Cikla legend of the Chinook (l. c., p. 21) and of the Micmac legend quoted before (Rand, l. c., p. 90).

In the legend of the visit of the War Gods to their father, the Sun, it is told how the Sun entered his house, hung up the sun on a peg, and gave his visitors irresistible weapons and protective armor (pp. 111, 113). We find the same incident in a Cathlamet myth relating a visit to the Sun, in which the man when carrying the Sun's arms is compelled to kill all whom he encounters.

The legend of Nač'ñěsčxani, who was enclosed in a hollow log and drifted down the river, reminds us somewhat of corresponding tales of the northern Athapascans which were recorded by Petitot (l. c., p. 56).

Other incidents which resemble those of northern legends are so general in character that I do not ascribe any weight to them as proving common origin of these legends. Such are the power of the hunters of reducing the bulk of their game in order to carry it home, which art the Coyote tries to practice among the Navaho as well (p. 97) as among the Kootenay (Verh. Berliner Ges. fuer Anthrop. 1891, p. 170); the magical descent from a great height, which proceeds without danger so long as the person keeps his eyes shut (p. 121); children formed of the epidermis that a woman rubs from her body (p. 148), which incident is of very frequent occurrence in northern traditions (see Boas, Sagen, etc., p. 358, No. 93), and small dishes of food which prove inexhaustible (pp. 165, 199), which compare with the references *ibid.*, p. 360, No. 142.

The more elaborate tales which are worked into the fabric of the legends of the Navaho and which are common to their mythology and to that of the northwest coast seem to me to be a

certain proof of the complex origin of the Navaho traditions. It is important to note that coincidences with Siouan and Algonquian legends are rare, and that only such are found as occur also on the north Pacific coast. It may be that a more detailed comparison with the mythologies of these tribes would reveal additional material common to them, but so far I have not been able to detect additional striking resemblances of complex tales. If no additional material common to the Navaho and to the tribes of the Mississippi basin and of the Northeast should be found, this would prove that the Navaho mythology has been influenced by those of the northwestern tribes, but not by those of the tribes of the Atlantic coast.

ON CERTAIN STONE IMAGES

CYRUS THOMAS

As the subject of stone images of a certain type, brought forward in my paper (*American Anthropologist* for December, 1896), has been continued by the interesting communication of Professor Frederick Starr regarding some stone images from Mexico (*American Anthropologist* for February, 1897), it may be well to add notice of one found in the state of Washington by Dr James T. White, of Seattle.

Little is known of the history of this image, of which a side and a front view are given here. Dr White writes as follows in regard to it:

"It is of a blue, rather hard and compact sandstone, 8½ inches high, and weighs five pounds. The hole in the forehead goes through the head and appears to have been drilled. The eyes are pieces of some marine shell, species not determined. The workmanship is good, the carving neatly done, and the surface well dressed. I regret to say we have no history of the image. It was presented to our Young Naturalists' Society some years ago by a Mr Richards, now dead, who gave a party of Indians something to eat for it, but made no effort to find out who they were or where they were from. In all probability it came from San Juan islands, and Judge Wickersham's explanation of its use (given below) is the most probable one.

"I wrote to Hon. James Wickersham, Tacoma, in regard to